



Dorian Dodson, Cabinet Secretary

For immediate release:
February 1, 2008

Contact: Chris Minnick, Health Department
Office: 575-528-5197, Cell: 575-649-0754 or
Deborah Martinez: CYFD, 699-1828

New Mexico Recognizes First Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week Department of Health Distributes Resource Toolkit

NM Children, Youth and Families Dept., administrator of domestic violence programs, partners with DOH

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is distributing a teen dating violence toolkit that contains evidence-based curricula and suggestions on activities people can do in their communities to raise awareness about this important issue. The Department of Health is working with numerous state agencies, coalitions and families to recognize New Mexico’s first Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week, Feb. 4 to 8.

One in 10 students in New Mexico report being physically assaulted by a dating partner, according to a Department of Health survey. One in five teenagers in serious relationships nationwide report being hit, slapped or pushed by a partner. Amazingly 23 percent of teens reported the abuse to no one.

Governor Bill Richardson signed a proclamation declaring New Mexico’s Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week, joining a national initiative that gives voice to the importance of heightening public awareness about the prevalence of teen dating violence.

“Teen dating violence compromises the health and well-being of New Mexico’s young people daily and places them at greater risk for truancy, substance abuse, teen pregnancy and suicide,” said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil. “Talk to the young people in your lives so they know the importance of recognizing dating violence and what resources are available in your communities.”

The Department is working with Children, Youth and Families and Public Education departments as well as the New Mexico Children’s Cabinet, New Mexico Domestic Violence Leadership Commission and New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women to raise awareness and educate communities about the importance of strengthening the safety and well-being of New Mexico’s young people.

“CYFD is committed to this multi-systemic collaboration that will raise awareness about a critical need in New Mexico – addressing issues around teen dating violence,” said Dorian Dodson, Secretary of the Children, Youth and Families Department. “Teen Dating Violence Awareness Week and Governor Richardson’s proclamation bring this issue to the forefront.”

-- MORE --

Girls who attended town hall meetings held last year by the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women recommended the following to address dating violence:

- Establish programs to promote self-confidence and programs that provide family support.
- Enact stricter laws concerning the domestic abuser, possibly longer sentences.
- More affordable counseling is needed to educate about domestic violence and self worth.
- Staff in these programs should be trained to work specifically with teens.
- Orders of protection should be available to teenagers.
- Funding for domestic violence shelters is needed to offer trainings to parents with information on teen dating violence.

In this legislative session Governor Richardson is advocating for stronger penalties for people who commit domestic violence. Sen. Rod Adair is sponsoring SB 68, which would increase penalties for the third and subsequent offenses of battery and aggravated battery against household members, including dating or intimate partners.

###